

The CZAR'S SPY

The Mystery of a Silent Love
by Chevalier WILLIAM LE QUEUX
AUTHOR OF "THE CLOSED BOOK," ETC.
ILLUSTRATIONS BY C-D-RHODES

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SYNOPSIS.

Gordon Gregg, dining aboard with Horby, the yacht Lolo's owner, accidentally sees a torn photograph of a young girl. That night the consul's safe is robbed. The police find that Horby is a fraud and the Lolo's name is false. In London Gregg is trapped nearly to his death by a former servant, Olinio. While in Dumfries Gregg meets Muriel Leithcourt. Horby appears and Muriel introduces him as Martin Woodroffe, her father's friend. Gregg sees a copy of the torn photograph on the Lolo and finds that the young girl is Muriel's friend, Woodroffe disappears. Gregg discovers the body of a murdered woman in Rannoch wood. The body disappears and in its place is found the body of Olinio. Muriel and Gregg search Rannoch wood together, and find the body of Armida, Olinio's wife. When the police go to the wood the body has disappeared. In London Gregg meets Olinio, alive and well. Gregg traces the young girl of the torn photograph, and finds that she is Elma Heath, niece of Baron Oberg, who has taken her to Abo, Finland, and that she holds a secret affecting Woodroffe. On his return to Rannoch Gregg finds the Leithcourt fled from Hydon Chatter, who had called there. He goes to Abo, and after a fight with the police chief, is conducted to Kajana, where he finds Elma imprisoned. A surgical operation has made her deaf and dumb. He escapes with her. Pursuers overtaking them, Elma escapes into the forest and Gregg is taken to Abo.

CHAPTER XII—Continued.

"The prisoner, your excellency, desired to be brought here to you before being taken to Helsingfors. He said you would be aware of the facts."

"And so I am," remarked Boranski, with a smile. "There is no conspiracy. You must at once release this gentleman and the other two prisoners."

"But, excellency, the governor general has issued orders for the prisoner's arrest and deportation to Helsingfors."

"That may be. But I am chief of police in Abo, and I release him. The officer looked at me in such blank astonishment that I could not resist smiling."

"I am well aware of the reason of this Englishman's visit to the North," added Boranski. "More need not be said. Has the lady been arrested?"

"No, your excellency. Every effort is being made to find her. Colonel Smirnov has already been relieved of his post as governor of Kajana, and many of the guards are under arrest for complicity in the plot to allow the woman to escape."

"Ah, yes. I see from the dispatches that a reward is offered for her recapture."

"The governor general is determined that she shall not escape," remarked the other.

"She is probably hidden in the forest, somewhere or other."

"Of course. They are making a thorough search over every vesting of it. If she is there, she will most certainly be found."

"No doubt," remarked Boranski, leaning back in his padded chair and looking at me meaningly across the littered table. "And now I wish to speak to this Englishman privately, so please leave us. Also inform the other two prisoners that they are at liberty."

"But your excellency does this upon his own responsibility," he said anxiously. "Remember that I brought them to you under arrest."

"And I release them entirely at my own discretion," he said. "As chief of police of this province, I am permitted to use my jurisdiction, and I exercise it in this matter. You are at liberty to report that at Helsingfors, if you so desire, but I should suggest that you say nothing unless absolutely obliged—you understand?"

The manner in which Boranski spoke apparently decided my captor, for after a moment's hesitation he said, saluting:

"If that is really your wish, then I will obey." And he left.

"Excellency!" exclaimed the chief of police, rising quickly and walking towards me as soon as the door was closed and we were alone, "you have had a very narrow escape—very. I did my best to assist you. I succeeded in bribing the water guards at Kajana in order that you might secure the lady's release. But it seems that just at the very moment when you were about to get away one of the guards turned informer and roused the governor of the castle, with the result that you all three nearly lost your lives. The whole matter has been reported to me officially, and," he added with a grim smile, "my men are now searching everywhere for you."

"But why is Baron Oberg so extremely anxious to recapture Miss Heath?" I asked earnestly.

"I have no idea," was his reply. "The secret orders from Helsingfors

to me are to arrest her at all hazards—alive or dead."

"Which means that the baron would not regret if she were dead," I remarked, in response to which he nodded in the affirmative.

I told him of the faithful services of Felix, the Finlander, whereupon he said simply: "I told you that you might trust him implicitly."

"But now that you have shown yourself my friend," I said, "you will assist Miss Heath to escape this man, who desires to hold her prisoner in that awful place? They are driving her mad."

"I will do my best," he answered, but shaking his head dubiously. "But you must recollect that Baron Oberg is governor general of Finland, with all the powers of the czar himself."

"And if Elma Heath again falls into his unscrupulous hands, she will die," I declared.

"Ah!" he sighed, looking me straight in the face. "I swear that what you say is only too true. She evidently holds some secret which he fears she will reveal. He wishes to rearrest her in order—well—he added in a low tone, "in order to close her lips. It would not be the first time that persons have been silenced in secret at Kajana. Many fatal accidents take place in that fortress, you know."

CHAPTER XIII.

"The Stranger."

Where was Elma? What was the cause of her inexplicable disappearance into the gloomy forest while we had slept?

I returned to the hotel where I had stayed on my arrival, a comfortable place called the Phoenix, and lunched there alone. Both Felix, the Finn, and my host, the wood cutter, had received their documents and left, but to the last-named I had given instructions to return home at once and report by telegraph any news of my lost one.

A thousand conflicting thoughts arose within me as I sat in that crowded salie a manager filled with a glib crowd of the commercial men of Abo. I had, I recognized, now to deal with the most powerful man in that country, and I suffered a distinct disadvantage by being in ignorance of the reason he held that sweet English girl a prisoner. The tragedy of the dastardly manner in which she had been willfully maimed caused my blood to boil within me. I had never believed that in this civilized twentieth century such things could be.

Why she had disappeared without warning I was at loss to imagine, yet I could only surmise that her flight had been compulsory. Another very curious feature in the affair was the sudden manner in which Michael Boranski had exacted his power and influence in order to render me that service.

There was, I felt convinced, some hidden motive in all that sudden and marked friendliness. That he really hated the English I had seen plainly when we had first met, and I had only compelled him to serve me by presenting the order signed by the emperor, which made me his guest within the Russian dominions. Even that document did not account for the length he had gone to secure the release of the woman I now loved in secret.

I could not bring myself to leave Finland, and allow Elma to fall into the clutches of that high official who so persistently sought her end. No, I would go to him and face him. I was anxious to see what manner of man was "The Stranger of Finland." That same evening I left Abo, and traveled by rail to Helsingfors.

At noon I descended from a drosky before a long, gray, massive building, over the big doorway of which was a large escutcheon bearing the Russian arms emblazoned in gold, and on entering where a sentry stood on either side, a colossal concierge in livery of bright blue and gold came forward to meet me.

Following his directions, I crossed a great, bare courtyard, and, ascending a wide stone staircase, was confronted by a servant, who took my coat to Colonel Luganski, who he informed me was the baron's private secretary.

After ten minutes or so the man returned, saying:

"The colonel will see you if you will please step this way," and conducted me into the richly furnished private

apartments of the palace, across a great hall filled with fine paintings, and then up a long, thickly carpeted passage to a small, elegant room, where a tall, bald-headed man in military uniform stood awaiting me.

"Your name is M'sieur Gregg," he exclaimed in very good French, "and I understand you desire audience of his excellency, the governor general. I regret, however, that he never gives audience to strangers."

"The matter upon which I desire to see his excellency is of a purely private and confidential nature," I said, for, used as I was to the ways of foreign officialdom, I spoke with the same firm courtesy as himself.

"If I write the nature of my business and inclose it in an envelope, will you then take it to him?" I suggested.

He hesitated for a short time, twining his mustache, and then replied with great reluctance:

"Well, if you are so determined, you may write your business upon your card."

I therefore took out one, and on the back in French:

"To give information regarding Miss Elma Heath."

Ring a bell, he handed it to the footman who appeared. The response came in a few minutes.

"His excellency will give audience to the English m'sieu."

The apartment of the governor general was splendidly decorated, and in the center of the parquet floor, with his back to the light, was the thin, wiry figure of an elderly man in a funeral frock coat, in the lapel of which showed the red and yellow ribbon of the Order of St. Anne. His hands were behind his back, and he stood purposely in such a position that when I entered I could not at first

see his face against the strong, gray light behind.

But when the footman had bowed and retired and we were alone, he turned slightly, and I then saw that his bony face, with high cheek bones, slight gray side whiskers, hard mouth and black eyes set closely together, was of one who could act without any compunction and without regret.

Truly one would not be surprised at any cruel, dastardly action of a man with such a face—the face of an oppressor.

"Well?" he snapped in French in a high-pitched voice. "You want to see me concerning that mad English girl? What picturesque lies do you intend to tell me concerning her?"

"I have no intention of telling any untruths concerning her," was my quick response, as I faced him unflinchingly. "She has told me sufficient to—"

His eyes met mine, and I saw by his drawn face and narrow brows that my words were causing him the utmost consternation. My object was to make him believe that I knew more than I really did—to hold him in fear, in fact.

"Perhaps the man whom some know as Hornby, or Woodroffe, could tell an interesting story," I went on. "He will, no doubt, when he meets Elma Heath, and finds the terrible affliction of which she has been the victim."

His thin, bony countenance was bloodless, his mouth twitched and his gray brows contracted quickly.

"I haven't the least idea what you mean, my dear sir," he stammered. "All that you say is entirely enigmatical to me. What have I to do with this mad Englishwoman's affairs?"

"Only that you knew her. Remember, baron, that your secret is mine," I said in a clear voice full of meaning.

"Very well. You know better than myself," he laughed. "The offense for which she was condemned to confinement in a fortress was the attempted assassination of Madame Vakuroff, wife of the general commanding the Uleborg military division."

"Assassination!" I said. "Have you actually sent her to prison as a murderer?"

"I have not. The criminal court of Abo did so," he said dryly. "The offense has since been proved to have been the outcome of a political conspiracy, and the minister of the interior in Petersburg last week signed an order for the prisoner's transportation to the island of Saghalien."

"Ah!" I remarked with set teeth. "Because you fear lest she shall write down your secret?"

"You are insulting! You evidently do not know what you are saying," he exclaimed resentfully.

"I know what I am saying quite well. You have requested her removal to Saghalien in order that the truth shall never be known. But, Baron Oberg," I added with mock politeness, "you may do as you will, you may send Elma Heath to her grave, you may hold her prisoner if you dare, but there are still witnesses of your crime that will rise against you."

In an instant he went ghastly pale, and I knew that my shot had struck its mark. The man before me was guilty of some crime, but what it was only Elma herself could tell.

"I merely wish to impress upon you the fact that I have not the slightest interest whatsoever in the person in question," he said coldly. "You seem to have formed some romantic attachment towards this young woman who attempted to poison Madame Vakuroff, and to have succeeded in rescuing her from Kajana. You afterwards disregard the fact that you are liable to a long term of imprisonment yourself, and actually have the audacity to seek audience of me and make all sorts of hints and suggestions that I have held the woman a prisoner for my own ends!"

"Not only do I repeat that, Baron Oberg," I said quickly. "But I also allege that it was at your instigation that in Siena the operation was performed upon the unfortunate girl which deprived her of speech and hearing."

He laughed again, but uneasily, a forced laugh, and leaned against the edge of the big writing table near the window.

"Well, what next?" he inquired, pretending to be interested in my allegations. "What do you want of me?"

"I desire you to give Mademoiselle Heath her complete freedom," I said.

"But her future is not in my hands. The minister in Petersburg has decreed her removal to Saghalien as a person dangerous to the state."

"You have posed in England as the uncle of Elma Heath, and yet you here hold her a prisoner. For what reason?" I demanded.

"She is held prisoner by the state—for conspiracy against Russian rule—not by herself personally."

"Who enticed her here? Why, you, yourself. Who conspired to throw the guilt of this attempted murder of the general's wife upon her? You— you, the man whom they call 'The Stranger of Finland!' But I will avenge the cruel and abominable affliction you have placed upon her. Her secret—your secret, Baron Oberg—shall be published to the world. You are her enemy—and therefore mine!"

"Very well," he growled between his teeth, advancing towards me threateningly, his fists clenched in his rage. "Recollect, m'sieur, that you have insulted me. Recollect that I am governor general of Finland."

"If you were czar himself, I should not hesitate to denounce you as the tyrant and mutilator of a poor, defenseless woman."

"And to whom, pray, will you tell this romantic story of yours?" he laughed hoarsely. "To your prison walls below the lake of Kajana? Yes, M'sieur Gregg, you will go there, and once within the fortress you shall never again see the light of day. You threaten me—the governor general of Finland!" he laughed in a strange, high-pitched key as he threw himself into a chair and scribbled something rapidly upon paper, appending his signature in his small, crabbed handwriting.

"I do not threaten," I said in open defiance, "I shall act."

"And so shall I," he said with an evil grin upon his bony face as he blotted what he had written and took it up, adding: "In the darkness and silence of your living tomb you can tell whatever strange stories you like concerning me. They are used to idiots where you are going," he added grimly.

"Oh! And where am I going?"

"Back to Kajana. This order consigns you to confinement there as a dangerous political conspirator, as one who has threatened me—it consigns you to the cells below the lake—for life!"

I laughed aloud, and my hand sought my wallet, wherein was that all-powerful document—the order of the emperor which gave me, as an imperial guest, immunity from arrest. I would produce it as my trump card.

Next second, however, I held my breath, and I think I must have turned pale. My pocket was empty! My wallet had been stolen! Entirely and helplessly I had fallen into the hands of the tyrant of the czar.

We faced each other, and I looked straight into his gray, bony face, and answered in a tone of defiance:

"Ah! you surely do not think that I, after ten years' service in the British diplomatic service, would dare to come to Finland upon this quest—would dare to face the rotten and corrupt officialdom which Russia has placed within this country—without first taking some adequate precaution? No, baron. Therefore I defy you, and I leave Helsingfors tonight."

"You will not. You are under arrest."

I laughed heartily and snapped my fingers, saying: "Before you give me over to your police, first telegraph to your minister of finance, Monsieur de Witte, and inquire of him who and what I am."

"I don't understand you."

"You have merely to send my name and description to the minister and ask for a reply," I said. "He will give you instructions—or, if you so desire, ask his majesty yourself."

"And why, pray, does his majesty concern himself about you?" he asked, at once puzzled.

"You will learn later, after I am confined in Kajana and your secret is known in Petersburg."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," I said, "I mean that I have taken all the necessary steps to be forewarned against you. The day I am incarcerated by your order the whole truth will be known. I shall not be the sufferer—but you will."

My words, purposely enigmatical, misled him. He saw the drift of my argument, and being of course unaware of how much I knew, he was still in fear of me. My only uncertainty was of the actual fate of poor Elma. My wallet had been stolen—with a purpose, without a doubt—for the thief had deprived me of that most important of all documents, the open sesame to every closed door, the ukase of the czar.

"You defy me!" he said hoarsely, turning back to the window with the written order for my imprisonment as a political still in his hand. "But we shall see."

"You rule Finland," I said in a hard tone, "but you have no power over Gordon Gregg."

"I have power, and intend to exert it."

"For your own ruin," I remarked with a self-confident smile. "The czar may be your patron, and you his favorite, but his majesty has no tolerance of officials who are guilty of what you are guilty of. You talk of arresting me! I added with a smile. 'Why, you ought rather to go on your knees and beg my silence.'"

He went white with rage at my cutting sarcasm. He literally blurted over, for he saw that I was quite cool and had no fear of him or of the terrible punishment to which he intended to consign me. Besides which, he was filled with wonder regarding the exact amount of information which Elma had imparted to me.

"Arrest me if you like. Denounce me by means of any lie that arises to your lips, but remember that the truth is known beyond the confines of the Russian empire, and for that reason traces will be sought of me and full explanation demanded. I have taken precaution, Xavier Oberg," I added, "therefore do your worst. I repeat again that I defy you!"

He paced the big room, his thin, clawlike hands still clenched, his yellow teeth grinding, his dark, deep-set eyes fixed straight before him. If he had dared he would have struck me down at his feet. But he did not dare. I saw too plainly that even though my wallet was gone I still held the trump card—that he feared me.

I had led him to believe that I knew everything, and that his future was in my hands, while he, on his part, was anxious to hold me prisoner, and yet dared not do so.

The baron had halted, and was looking through one of the great windows down upon the courtyard below, where sentries were pacing. The palace was for him a gilded prison, for he dared not go out for a drive in one of the water across to Hogshead or Dagero, being compelled to remain there for months without showing himself publicly. People in Abo had told me that when he did go out into the streets of Helsingfors it was at night, and he usually disguised himself in the uniform of a private soldier of the guard, thus escaping recognition by those who, driven to desperation by injustice, sought his life.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Robbery That Hurt.

When a thief drove out of the town of Silverhill, Nev., with a team of horses belonging to Curley Jones, a mine owner, he took with him the only conveyance in the town. As a result, Jones was compelled to walk 35 miles over mountain and desert to notify the sheriff.

Deep Snow in Scotland.

Snow fell last winter to a depth of over three feet in the upland districts of Athol and Strathgairn, and on several sheep-grazing holdings it was impossible to gather the sheep herds. In one case a shepherd's dog successfully located a sheep which got enveloped in a large wreath. The dog scraped away the snow, disclosing the presence of the sheep, which was none the worse for its confinement. For some time hand feeding of hill herds and high-lying grazing stocks had to be resorted to. While hay is fairly plentiful this season the stock of roots available is somewhat small.

Offered Opportunity.

Not long ago a certain Michigan food inspector was watching a stand where for one cent a dab of ice cream on a soda cracker was handed out. He thought himself quite unnoticed, when a pretty miss held out half-eaten cracker to him saying, much to the delight of the crowd:

"I bet you're one of those noisy food inspectors. Here, just taste this and see if it's sanitary."

Parents of today lose much by not being old-fashioned, their children lose more and the nation suffers most of all, for no people can be truly strong when the heartstone ceases to draw with compelling force, and when father and mother and children are separated in the pursuit of the excitement that take the place of the old-fashioned home life.

When Tommy Swore.

Here is a minor tragedy of the war, but a very real one, says the London Mirror. Tommy had not tasted tea for days; he was longing for tea with an intensity which only comes upon one in a French village. He had just enough tea and sugar to make one tinful, but no hot water, and no French with which to ask for it. With wild gesticulation he sought to explain to a woman his need. She took the tin of tea and sugar and disappeared into her cottage. Anon she emerged triumphant, with the tin full of cold water and Tommy's whole stock of tea floating about in it. Then it was that French came to him. He says he spoke it like a trooper.

Return to It Would Be of Benefit to the Nation, Is the Opinion of New Yorker.

Again we hear the praises sung of "the old-fashioned mother"—it is a theme to arouse tender memories and to inspire imitation among the women of today, remarks the New York Mail.

The old-fashioned mother, home-loving and devoted to her children, caring for them in sickness and in health, from the cradle to the end—it was she who made the home and kept it, and who made the nation strong and great in the stability of its units, the homes.

But there was the old-fashioned father, too, who found his greatest pleasure in being by the side of the old-fashioned mother, with their children about them. To him the family fire-side was the best place on earth, and he helped to make it such, and mother and father were the best people in the world in those days when they nightly gathered their brood about them for the family hour—the best hour in the twenty-four.

PLEA FOR THE OLD HOME LIFE

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ON NARROW GAUGE TRACKS

Railroads Used for Warfare in Europe Have Equipment That Is Especially Built.

Among the adaptations of devices of domestic convenience to the requirements of modern warfare is the employment of narrow gauge railways in the supply of trenches on the battle lines at the front in Europe. More than 100 such trains, it is reported, are now in construction at works in Pennsylvania.

These trains, as described, will run upon a track two feet in width, in tunnels so small that they can reach the firing line, right into the trenches, unseen by the enemy, carrying ammunition, shrapnel, hand grenades and arms. By so much, it is expected the resources of the trench fighters will be supplied. The use of such miniature trains is an incident of the evolution of the system of underground close-to-hand fighting adopted in this war.—Boston Post.

Alert Attention.

"What gave you your start in public life?" asked the biographer.

"I haven't time to think about that now," replied Senator Sorghum. "What I'm looking out for now is the way I'm liable to get my finish."

Congenial.

"They seem to be well mated."

"They are. They both studied bridge whist from the same authority